

we have been steadily losing capacity; and this, again, is mostly due to environmental regulation. We have mandated also 13 blends of gasoline. These are called boutique fuels, which add expense and time to fuel refining; and of course, in many cities, like Chicago, you may have to have three or four different fuel blends in a year. Every time you change a blend, you shut down the refinery, you clean the pipes and you start over again; and, again, that adds to expense. Katrina's destruction of refineries has pushed us over the brink. Obviously, just losing 5 or 10 percent, with such a thin margin, has made it somewhat inoperable.

Four, we have increased reliance on foreign oil, which everybody realizes. We are nearly 60 percent dependent on foreign oil at the present time. Much of this is from OPEC. So they can simply have a meeting, tighten the screws and prices go up. This contributes greatly, this dependence on foreign oil, to a \$670 billion annual trade deficit, which this country simply cannot continue to sustain. We have to get more energy-independent, obviously.

I guess fifth, something that is in everybody's mind, is has price gouging occurred? To be honest with you, I do not know. I do not think anybody at this point knows, but I do know this: E85, that is 85 percent ethanol, was \$1.60 in my State of Nebraska 4 weeks ago. Today, it is \$2.75, an increase of \$1.15 in 4 weeks. Katrina did not have anything to do with that because the cost of corn has remained low. All of the ethanol manufacturing is done in the Midwest, and so the hurricane had nothing to do with this issue. I think these are things that have to be looked into, probably by Congress.

The solution eventually, I hope, will be, what we have in our energy bill, will eventually provide relief, ethanol, biodiesel, solar, wind energy, nuclear, hydrogen fuel cells, and I think some additional refinery capacity; but it is all going to take time. This will be a difficult time, and I think Congress probably really needs to do some soul searching and look at some of the regulations we have placed upon ourselves.

KATRINA DISASTER RESPONSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, these last 9 days have been as difficult as any in our Nation's history. The devastation caused by the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to the thousands of citizens from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama is, put simply, without precedent in this country.

The images that we have seen, that we continue to see, are unimaginable: people cutting through their rooftops simply to keep their families above the rising flood water; seniors in wheelchairs stuck in 110-degree convention centers and stadiums for days with

plumbing overflowing and no food or drinking water; parents desperately needing for family members to call them and let them know they are safe; unspeakable acts of lawlessness and violence.

We have seen ordinary citizens with shovels burying the dead, not because they knew them, but out of respect, because it was the right thing to do. Just yesterday, The Washington Post ran a picture of a body of a man who had died of seizures outside a New Orleans gas station, his dog lying by his side for 5 days.

So it is unsurprising that countless Americans from across the country have expressed their outrage at the slow Federal response to this tragedy. Indeed, the slow response and tepid leadership cost us many lives on the gulf coast. Thankfully, as we speak, our troops, National Guard, rescue personnel from across the country and ordinary citizens in cities across America are volunteering and giving to take in the homeless, continue the rescue. Heroism is winning out.

Indeed, of all the tragedies that have befallen our country and the gulf coast in the last week, perhaps the saddest is that we knew that this day was coming for New Orleans. Contrary to the President's assertions that this flooding was unexpected, scientists, Federal officials, and others had predicted the potential for a Katrina-like disaster for decades. In 2002, the New Orleans Times-Picayune ran the now-infamous five-part series exploring the vulnerability of the city, specifically addressing the possibility of massive floods drowning residents, destroying homes, releasing toxic chemicals throughout the city. Just days ago, FEMA Director Brown, Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff listened in on electronic briefings given by the staff before Hurricane Katrina had even touched Louisiana and Mississippi. They knew full well of the storm's deadly potential.

Yet they were unprepared to do anything about it. Last year, former director of FEMA James Lee Witt said as much, testifying before a panel I chaired outside of the Congress. He told the committee, and I quote, "Scientists tell us that we are going to be seeing more catastrophic natural disaster events in the 21st century than we have ever seen, more devastating. And yet we have destroyed the one agency that not only responds to those events but also works with State and local governments to do pre-disaster mitigation prevention before that risk could ever happen, to minimize that risk."

He went on to say that there were virtually no communications within FEMA itself and that it no longer had the communications channels or partnerships with State and local governments that it needed. Indeed, he said communications were virtually nonexistent between FEMA headquarters in Washington and its 10 regional offices. It took the submerging of one of

our most culturally vibrant cities to put Director Witt's words to the test.

So this is not about assigning blame at an untimely moment. It is about understanding what this administration has done to FEMA, which is a symbol of its priorities and underlying values. They have cut the heart out of FEMA, as they have cut the heart out of so much of our capacity to address our domestic needs and secure our homeland from terrorist threats, from natural disasters, from global economic changes. The reason why the head of FEMA is so speechless at this moment and why he must go is that he represents an approach that leaves us with our fingers crossed instead of with real vision for tackling the threats before America.

This administration and this Congress' answer to every problem is more tax cuts, mostly for the most privileged. They have left us saddled with bulging deficits, a diminished Social Security trust fund, weakened investments in our own people and communities, and that is why the Federal Government and the agency responsible for emergency relief failed to act and failed to lead.

I start by calling for the resignation of Michael Brown, the director of FEMA, as a statement by the administration and our country that we intend to face these challenges in a wholly new way. It is the only way we can honor the heroism that we are now witnessing in New Orleans, across the gulf coast, and around the country.

I make this request as a Member of the United States Congress and an American, not as a partisan. We need to unite now just as our volunteers, our police, firemen, troops are united in a common effort. That means accepting that we have the responsibility as a community to tackle the rescue and tackle the rebuilding of this part of our country. Those are the values that now govern in this period.

We must make sure that our budget priorities are reordered, not to reward greed but civic virtue. We must rebuild. We must give people the capacity to remake their lives, and it starts by getting this relief effort right. The new appropriations of our resources must enable people to get housing, get their families back on track, repair the levee breaches, pumping out the flood water, giving food and shelter. We must invest in New Orleans, but also in our infrastructure and environment and our people.

That is why America is so special, Mr. Speaker. We have to do so much in this institution, not measured only in dollars and in cents but our character and our compassion that is evident every day as we watch the heroism of the gulf coast. It is a time for leadership and heroism as well.